592 His relationship was however remembered, and
582 he was regarded as the ritual father (appan) of
608 the woman's children, in contrast to their genitor or to the step-father who happened currently to be visiting a woman, these latter both being
608 called acchan. Ritual fatherhood meant nothing
764 at all except that at the death of the tali-tier,
602 the woman and all her children must observe death pollution. Death pollution was otherwise observed only for matrilineal kin; it was not until recently observed for the genitor or other lovers of the mother. Its observance for the tali-tier shows that even the Nayars, with their extreme emphasis on the matrilineal line and total exclusion of the husband and father from economic, legal or ceremonial rights, recognized the field of kinship to extend beyond the unilineal descent-group, and felt the need to give ceremonial recognition [73] to the concepts of marriage and of paternity, even though they gave none to the individual husband and father.

595 After the tali-rite and shortly before or after
833 puberty, a girl might enter into a number of unions with men of her own subcaste (including, if both wished, the ritual husband of the tali-rite) or of an appropriate higher subcaste. Similarly, a man might cohabit with any number of mistresses from his own or an appropriate lower subcaste. A man usually visited a mistress after supper, and left before breakfast; even today in orthodox matrilocal households men eat with their sisters and mothers and visit or accept food in the conjugal house in the daytime only on special invitation from the wife's karanavan.

595 833 Traditionally, the visiting lover placed his weapons outside the door as a warning to other men that he was within. My informants reported that more recently, until the end of the nineteenth century in some villages, if two lovers of a woman called on the same night the one who came last slept outside on the verandah. Usually the regular lovers of a woman (who might not be from the same lineage) knew each other and informally agreed upon their turns.

595 It is difficult to decide from the evidence whether this instution of combined polyandrous and polygynous mating can strictly be regarded as "marriage" in any usual sense of the term. Personally, I prefer the word "marriage" for the ritual marriage of talikettukalyanam (which old English speaking Nayars even today state to have been "the real marriage"), because it gave ceremonial recognition, to a stable relationship of perpetual hereditary affinal kinship between lineages in the local group. Moreover, although exclusive sexual rights in the woman were given up at once at the "divorce", the observance of death [74] pollution by the woman and her children indicates that in some sense the relationship was thought to continue for life.

595 684 551 However, the evidence suggests that post-puberty liaisons too were perhaps not entirely promiscuous; moreover, the more permanent of them at all events were attended by ceremonial obligations. First, liaisons were strictly limited to men of the appropriate "good" castes; sex unions with men of lower caste were categorically forbidden and for women, punishable

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androus and divorce was freely practiced, but a princess probably did not regularly entertain more than one husband at a time. Older Nambudiri Brahman husbands often introduced their own younger kinsmen into the palace; for this reason both matrilateral cross-cousin marriage and paternal parallel-cousin marriage were common in Brahman-royal unions. Princes, chiefs, and high-ranking Nambudiri Brahmans were sometimes polygynous. Their wives, however, were probably seldom polyandrous; for aristocrats seem often to have exercised the power to monopolize the attentions of their favorite Nayar wives. They were therefore more sure of the paternity of their Nayar sons, upon whom they sometimes conferred military or political offices.

In all hypergamous unions the husband observed the normal all-India caste rules of pollution except with regard to sexual intercourse. He might not receive food from his wife's caste and had little communication with her or her children in the daytime. Affinal relationships were correspondingly more restricted than in the retainer castes, for a woman had very little communication with her husband's natal kin; she and her children used no kinship terms for them. If the wife was of lower social as well as ritual rank than the husband she did not visit his natal home. Conversely, princesses do not seem to have demeaned themselves socially by visiting the homes of their ritually higher-ranking husbands. A Nayar wife who was of similar social rank to her Brahman or temple-servant husband might occasionally visit the womenfolk of his home, but she was received in an outbuilding and might not eat with them. Similarly, husbands in hypergamous unions had highly formalized and restricted relationships with the matrilineal kinsmen of their wives. The wives' elder kinsmen were accorded the respect due their age; the husband, that due his superior ritual rank.

Relationships between matrilineal kin among the aristocrats were a sharpened version of those found among retainer Nayars. Between men, the etiquette associated with age rank was highly stereotyped. Among the senior princes who were likely to compete for political office it reached the point of avoidance, a condition facilitated by their separate residences as sthānis. The etiquette of respect was similarly elaborated between men and women. After the age of fifteen a prince might converse with older women of his palace only by appointment and in some public place. He must scrupulously avoid the presence of younger kinswomen from the time of their *tāli* rite. In the potentially larger property groups of the aristocrats these rules of etiquette obviously militated against the expression of aggression between men as well as preventing incestuous relations between the sexes.

564 613 588 [184] [586] [765] [783] of cohabitation; and on the fourth day the bridegroom severs his connection with the girl, symbolising divorce by cutting into two pieces the cloth (called kachai cloth) which she wears. The tearing of the cloth is, however, confined to South Malabar. These are the essentials of the ceremony, an adjunct to which is that, in spite of the divorce, the girl observes death-pollution when her Manavâlan dies. The same Manavâlan may tie the tâli on any number of girls, during the same ceremony or at any other time; and he may be old or young. He is often an elderly holy Brâhman, who receives a small present for his services. The ceremony is always the occasion of feasting and jollification. The girl may remove the tâli if she likes after the fourth day.

588 In some parts of Malabar there is no doubt that the man who performs the rôle of Manavâlan is considered to have some right to the girl, but in such a case it has been already considered that he is a proper man to enter into Sambandham with her. It will be as well to remark here that almost invariably amongst the inferior races, the aboriginals so to speak of Malabar, girls are married [833] (their marriage is consummated) before puberty. The fuss that was made a few years ago (by the shrieking sisterhood) about the age of consent has had no effect there.

613 585 [588] The tâli-tying ceremony having been performed while the girl is yet a child, the next step in the matter of her alliance with a man is the arrangement of the Sambandham. As the rule nothing more than the consent of the girl and of her guardian, the Kâranavan of the family, is necessary. There is no religious formality. The tâli-tying ceremony dispenses with everything of the kind. There is, however, in some parts a tendency now-a-days "to surround the occasion of first cohabitation with a more or less elaborate ceremonial." It is quite an informal affair, arranged by the Kâranavans of the two families. Many a time a young fellow of 22 or 24, answering my question whether he had contracted Sambandham with any one, replied that the head of his family had not yet arranged a Sambandham for him. The wishes of the contracting parties—for in great measure it is a contract—and of the heads of the families practically settle the matter. Should the parties find they are unsuited, they part. There is no dragging on under a bondage intolerable to both.

585 184 The following account was given by Mr. Chandu Menon (a Nâyar) to the Commission. He says:—

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564 582 421 Among Nambūdiris only the eldest son of the patrilineal family might take one or more wives from his caste and beget children for his family. Younger sons might form liaisons only with Nayar women, their children being Nayar by matrilineal descent. Nambūdiri younger sons, like unmarried Nambūdiri women (of whom there were many), had rights to maintenance from the ancestral estate but might not divide the property. These customs ensured the stability of the Nambūdiri estate by preventing it from increasing in numbers and splitting into segments.

595 [833] [431] [843] [851] [431] In all the matrilineal castes the husband, whether alone or of a group, had none but sexual rights in his wife and few economic obligations. Sex-relations were called *sambandham* ('joining together'), and were initiated without religious rites. On his first visit the lover customarily presented the woman with a loin-cloth before her matrilineal kin. He might also place a sovereign under the pillow before leaving next morning, but neither gift was obligatory. When a woman became pregnant, she must name one or more men of appropriate sub-caste as possible fathers: this vindicated her from the charge of cohabitation with a low-caste man. The men named must jointly meet the expenses of her delivery; their payment of this sum to the barber-midwife was a public acknowledgment that the child had been licitly begotten by a man of correct sub-caste. In addition, her lovers provided a woman with bathing-oil, clothing, and ceremonial gifts of vegetables at the three main festivals of the year. These payments were a sign of their continued association with her. Beyond this, a lover had no obligations to his mistress; either of them might stop cohabitation at will.

595 85 601 564 [613] With polyandrous unions, the physiological fatherhood of a child was often unknown. Even when known, the father had no rights in nor obligations to his children. All the current lovers of the mother were called *acchan* (father) but kinship terms were not extended to their lineage-kin. Though he might play with his children, the father might not dispute their *kāranavan*'s authority. In hypergamous unions, the higher caste father might not eat in the house of his mistress, and, after taking a bath in the morning, might not touch her nor her children.

613 588 [88] *The Nayar* Tāli-*Rite.* Though the first *sambandham* of a girl began without ceremony shortly before or after puberty, she must before puberty go through the *tālikettukalyānam.* This was collectively conducted by the lineage every ten to twelve years for all its immature girls. If a girl matured before the rite was performed, she must theoretically be cast out by her lineage and banished from her village. In fact, my informants said that in this event, the first menstruation (normally marked by public rites) would be kept secret by the lineage until after the *tāli*-rite could be performed.

The central rite of this ceremony was, as in the ordinary marriage of Tamil patrilineal castes and of the Nambūdiris, the tying of a gold ornament (*tāli*) strung on a thread of white silk, round the neck of the girl by a ritual bridegroom (*manavalan*).

613 621 564 In the retainer sub-castes the Nayar lineages of a village, or in some cases of a group of villages, formed a local sub-caste group (*tara*). Each lineage was linked by ties of ritual co-operation to two or more other lineages of the group. These linked lineages were called *enangar. Enangar* relations were reciprocal but not exclusive, so that in a group of eight lineages, lineage A might be *enangar* to B, C, D, and F; B to A, E, and F; C to A, H, and G; E to B, H, and G; F only to A and B; and H to E, D, and C. A chain of *enangar* relationships thus indirectly linked all lineages of the local sub-caste group. *Enangar* lineages must send representatives to ceremonies of the linked lineage, e.g. the termination of birth and death pollutions and the first menstruation of a girl. *Enangar* must also take note of breaches of caste law by members of their linked lineages and report such culprits for trial by the *tara* assembly. [692] 613 They were thus the formal links between a lineage and its assembly: they represented the local sub-caste group (called the *enangu*) to the individual lineages. In ceremonies, they played

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marriage rite. At the auspicious time, each girl was led in turn by her brother from the house and seated on the plank. At a sign from the astrologer, the Brahman priest (called Elayad, a low sub-caste of Nambūdiris who officiate at Nayar funerals) handed the *tāli* to the bridegroom, who tied it round the girl's neck. The nineteen couples were then secluded in the house for the remaining three days and nights of the rites. Informants said that in modern times when lineages were often large, the couples numerous and the girls sometimes infants, cohabitation would be unlikely. It was not, however, forbidden, and appears formerly to have been required. It is clear that the rite was ritually if not actually a defloration ceremony, as is indicated by the saying *Tāli kettiu amma āyi* ('having had the *tāli* tied, a girl becomes a [married] woman').

Next morning the party reassembled without the couples, and offerings to Bhagavadi took place. The participants were a Sūdra Nayar oracle (*velichchappād*), a Vattekad (oil-monger) Nayar sacrificial priest, and a Nayar boy who accompanied the oracle, carrying a staff to the top of which was tied a brush of coconut flowers. These officiants perform similarly by hereditary right at the annual Bhagavadi temple festival. The priest offered rice, paddy, coconuts, incense, a burning lamp, and toddy before the branch of the milk-tree, following which he sacrificed a cock and poured out a vessel of red blood-like liquid. The oracle then donned a waist-band and anklets of bells and took a sickle in his hand. (These symbolize the power of Bhagavadi: when he dons them it is believed that she enters and possesses the oracle.) Accompanied by loud music, he leapt wildly in the air, shouting hoarsely and chopping his forehead with the sickle till blood flowed down. In this frenzy he called out to the host *kāranavan* that the goddess was appeased by his offerings. His possession then subsided and his insignia were removed.

Bhagavadi is the Malabar goddess of war, smallpox, and the soil. Her idol, in the Nayar village temple, is a hollow cylindrical stone, a symbol of the vagina, as the Brahmanical idol of Siva is the lingam, a symbol of the phallus. Bhagavadi is also worshipped as the oracle's sickle, as a picture drawn in chalks on the floor, as the milk-tree (*Alstonia scholaris*), and as the ancestral sword of a Nayar lineage. She is believed to have protected the Nayars in war. She is fierce and vengeful, her chief power being to inflict smallpox. She is propitiated by similar rites during smallpox epidemics, on the sixteenth day after a smallpox death, and on the last night of her annual temple festival, during which she is angry with the villagers who must observe sexual continence.

The remainder of the second day, and the third day, were devoted to feasting and music. On the fourth morning each couple went to the village bathing pool where, hand-in-hand, they took a purifying plunge-bath. Then, decked in fine clothes, they returned to the lineage house. In the kitchen each couple ate a meal from the same loaf. The company was then fed, but on this day, alone of all days, women ate before men. The bridegrooms received clothing and foodstuffs from the *kāranavan* and departed for their respective homes.

In Pālakkara the *tāli*-tier might remain with his bride as her first *sambandham* lover. At the last *tāli*-rite two of the nineteen bridegrooms remained in association with their brides, though one abandoned his shortly afterwards. The other seventeen girls formed unions with other men of the village shortly after puberty. In all *tāli*-rites in this area, however, the 'bridegroom' remained the ritual husband of his 'bride' throughout his life, though he need never visit her again. At his death, the 'wife', together with her children by whatever physiological father, must observe fifteen days' pollution. Death pollution was otherwise traditionally observed only for matrilineal kin: not until recently was it observed for the *sambandham* lover and the physiological father. The *tāli*-tier of a woman was regarded, moreover, as the ritual father of her children. If they knew him, the children called this man *appan* (the Tamil word for 'father', used for the *genitor* by Tiyyars and Christians) as distinct from *acchan* (originally

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a Sanskrit word meaning 'the noble one') the Malayalam word used by Nayars for the *genitor* and all lovers of the mother. The *appan* had no obligations to nor rights in a child except that, at his death, the child observed pollution. Nevertheless, Pālakkara informants stressed that the *appan* was a child's 'real father', as the *tāli*-rite was a woman's 'real marriage'.

In Walluvanād and Calicut a different custom prevailed. After the final feast, the couples repaired to the marriage shed, where each ritual bridegroom tore in two the loin-cloth which had been worn during the three days of seclusion by his bride, retaining one half and handing the other to the girl. This ritual divorce indicated that the bride, though still in the status of a married woman, was now free to cohabit with whom she wished. She might however still take as lover the bridegroom who had divorced her. In spite of the 'divorce', the bride and her children observed pollution at the death of the bridegroom. In those lineages where the *tāli* was tied by a man of higher sub-caste, no cloth was severed after the rite, but the bridegroom, being an elderly man, was unlikely to cohabit with the girl again. However, she must, with her children, observe pollution at his death.

At some periods and in some areas of South Malabar and Cochin it seems that the ritual bridegroom was forbidden to enter into *sambandham* with his bride. In 1510 Barbosa stated that the *tāli*-tier was sometimes a 'relation' of the girl, and in this case, when he had tied the *tāli*, he must go away 'without touching her nor more to say to her on account of being her relation'. If, however, he was not a 'relation', 'he may remain with her if he wish it, but he is not bound to do so if he do not desire it' (*ibid.* p. 124). Unfortunately, Barbosa did not define the categories of 'relations' who might tie the *tāli*, but the accounts of all other writers leave no doubt that the ritual bridegroom could never have been a matrilineal kinsman of the girl. It is probable that, the *tāli* being tied either by an *enangan* or by some elderly man of higher sub-caste from which the lineage was wont to draw lovers, the ritual bridegroom might sometimes be a man who had previously had relations with some older woman of the girl's lineage. In this case he would be prohibited from entering into *sambandham* with her by the rule which forbids a man to have relations, serially or concurrently, with two women of the same lineage.

Buchanan, an East India Company doctor, seems to assume that the *tāli*-tier must deflower the bride, but might never cohabit with her thereafter. In 1800 he wrote of South Malabar Nayars: 'The Nayars marry before they are ten years of age, in order that the girls may not be deflowered by the regular operations of nature; but the husband never thereafter cohabits with his wife. Such a circumstance, indeed, would be considered as very indecent' (Buchanan 1807, p. 411). But Buchanan's account may be untrustworthy, since he later says of North Malabar Nayars: 'The female Nayars, while children, go through the ceremony of marriage, both with Nambouries and Nayars; but here, as well as in the south, the man and wife *never* cohabit' (*ibid.* p. 513; my italics), thus contradicting his earlier statement that the 'bridegroom' must deflower the bride. However, Logan (1887, p. 135), though he does not say whether the *tāli*-tier was expected to deflower the girl, states that in South Malabar the ritual husband might not solicit his 'wife's' favours in after-life.

Since I have not seen the *tāli*-rite, but relied on informants' statements, the above account is necessarily incomplete. I now add details provided by earlier writers.

For Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909–12, II, pp. 22–9) reports that in privileged families, the Maharaja gave permission for the rite, and the woman's kin made presents to him and to important Nambūdiris before it could take place. In retainer-lineages where an *enangan* tied the *tāli*, the Asān (military leader and, in modern times, schoolmaster) of the village must be present to give permission, and was paid money and foodstuffs by the woman's *kāranavan*. Similarly, in a Walluvanād village I visited, the *tāli* was tied in the presence of the *desavari*, who received gifts for his consent. N. Subramania Aiyar, quoted by Thurston &

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Rangachari (1909, V, p. 320), reports that in Travancore, the 'leading villager' gave his consent and received gifts from the bridegroom 'as if to recompense him'. This recalls the statement of one informant of Pālakkara, who said he had heard a rumour that in ancient days, the Aśān of the village had the right to deflower retainer-Nayar women, a right which he might forgo on payment of a sum of money.[1]

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The *tāli* is, as Thurston & Rangachari observe, shaped like a leaf of the *Ficus religiosa* (pipal) tree (*aśwatha*). This tree is worshipped by Nayars, Nambūdiris, and Tamil Brahmans as an embodiment of the Sanskrit god Vishnu. It is said to symbolize male creative power, the female tree with which it is associated being the *veppu* or margosa (*Melia Azadirachta*).[2] In the Tamil country, the two trees are frequently planted together in a mock-marriage ceremony, so that the creeping stems of the margosa may twine round the pipal tree like the arms of a faithful wife round her husband. Among Nayars, Tiyyars, Nambūdiris, and Tamil Brahmans, barren women are counselled to march a hundred and eight times round the ficus tree to obtain children. We are therefore probably justified in regarding the *tāli* as a phallic symbol, presented to the bride as a sign 'that she may now do what she pleases'.[3]

[842] [788]

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Innes (1908, p. 174) and Krishna Menon (1894) reports that, traditionally, the bridegroom's party approached the house flourishing weapons and shouting a war-cry. Later, before tying the *tāli*, the bridegroom laid his sword across his lap, and the girl took an arrow and a mirror in her hand. Mateer (1883) says that in Travancore, if the family were too poor to perform the ceremonies, the girl's mother might tie her *tāli* before a sword or a clay idol representing Kāma Devan, the Hindu god of passion.[4] Similarly, since the traditional ceremony died out, many Pālakkara mothers take their immature daughters to some Brahmanical temple dedicated to Vishnu (the god of marital and domestic prosperity) and themselves tie the *tāli* before the god.

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Fawcett (1901, pp. 229–32) observes that the girl's brother carried her into the marriage hall from the house, bore her three times round it, and seated her to the left of the bridegroom; Innes (1908, p. 174) remarks that she might be carried there either by her brother or her *kāranavan*. On the fourth day, after their bath, the couple returned to the girl's ancestral house to find its doors shut against them. The bridegroom must force open the doors before he could take his seat with his bride in the kitchen where they ate a meal together. Alternatively, he might enter the house last in the procession, when boys of the girl's lineage pelted him with plantain fruits, which he must ward off with his shield.

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According to Innes (*ibid.* p. 173), before the rite the girl was secluded for three days and nights in an inner room of the house, with a brass hand-mirror in her right hand, an arrow in her left, and the eight auspicious objects before her. On the second morning she went to the bathing pool, on the bank of which she must, after bathing, jump thrice over a brass vessel of water with an unhusked coconut on top, overturning both at the third time.

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I turn to the rite in the royal lineages. In the Cochin lineage, which prides itself on ancient, 'true' Kshattriya descent, the rite took the form of a Brahmanical marriage ceremony with Sanskrit *mantras* from the Grihya Sutras. It was performed separately for each girl before puberty by a Nambūdiri, who must actually deflower the girl on the night of the ceremonies. The bridegroom received a fee and departed after four days. The girl might then cohabit

[1] Dr Aiyappan (1932) similarly reports that the Aśān in some areas deflowered Nayar women at a ceremonial initiation.

[2] For a discussion of the symbolic significance of this tree see Dubois (1906, p. 652).

[3] My interpretation of the *tāli* as a phallic symbol is the more likely in that among Tamil Smartha Brahmans of Tanjore, the marriage *tāli* bears engraved upon it a *lingam*, the phallic emblem of Siva.

[4] This modern rite recalls the ceremonial marriage of the Devadasis (temple-dancers and prostitutes) in the Tamil country, in which the dedicated girl's *tāli* is tied by the temple priest before the god of the temple, or, if a girl fails to become dedicated to a god before puberty, by her mother in the presence of a sword. The 'marriage' is followed after puberty by the nuptials, at which a wealthy high caste man of the neighbourhood passes the night with the girl as the first of her lovers.

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with any Nambûdiri Brahman who had the consent of her *kāranavan*. Until recently, polyandry and divorce were said by my Nayar informants to have been even commoner than among Nayars.

In the Zamorin's and the Walluvanād lineages the *tāli* was tied by princes of the more ancient royal lineages of Kodungalur and Beypore. Actual defloration does not seem to have been obligatory in recent times. Kerr's (1811, ch 6) translation of Castaneda, however, states that

> . . . these sisters of the Zamorin, and other kings of Malabar, have handsome allowances to live upon; and, when any of them reaches the age of ten, their kindred send for a young man of the Nayar caste out of the kingdom, and give him presents to induce him to initiate the young virgin; after which he hangs a jewel around her neck, which she wears all the rest of her life as a token that she is now at liberty to dispose of herself to anyone she pleases as long as she lives.

Of the Zamorin's own marriage to a Nayar wife, Hamilton (1727, p. 172), a Scottish trader, wrote in 1723:

> When the Zamorin marries, he must not cohabit with his bride till the Nambourie or chief Priest has enjoyed her, and, if he pleases, may have Three Nights of her Company, because the first Fruits of her nuptials must be an holy Oblation to the God she worships; and some of the nobles are so complaisant as to allow the Clergy the same Tribute; but the common people cannot have that Compliment paid to them, but are forced to supply the Priest's place themselves.

Barbosa (Stanley, 1866, p. 124), writing in a more robust age, 1510, says of the Nayar commoners: 'And from that time forward [i.e. after the *tāli*-rite] the mother goes begging some young men to deflower the girl, for among themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women.'

The immediate significance of the *tāli*-rite for Nayars of this area, taken in conjunction with their combined polyandry and polygyny, is clear. A Nayar *tāvaẓi* is perpetuated by its women. Hence the extraordinary value set by Nayars on obtaining a sufficiency of husbands and thus of children for their lineage. The *tāli*-rite dramatizes this need of the lineage for male sexual partners who ('like breeding bulls', as a Calicut prince remarked) will fulfil the one role denied to men of the lineage in respect of their sisters and nieces. The bridegroom's role as *enangan* was significant in a caste community in which sex relations were promiscuous. In this rite, through a chosen representative, the local caste group as a whole 'married' the lineage as a whole, and ritually set free the procreative powers of its girls to perpetuate their lineage. The ritual 'divorce' on the fourth day freed the girls from their particular bridegrooms, as the fee which accompanied it freed their lineage from further obligations to these men. If he wished to perpetuate the relationship, the ritual bridegroom must come again in a different role, without prior claims, merely as one of a series of lovers. The 'divorce' foreshadows the jealousy with which Nayar men regard the post-puberty lovers of their sisters: these are prevented from interfering in household matters, and may be dismissed by the brothers in a momentary fit of pique. The separation of the *tāli*-rite (the ritual marriage) from the later *sambandham* unions (initiated without rites) thus underlines the necessity to the lineage of husbands and fathers, while denying to the individual husband and father a legally and socially significant role in relation to his wife and children.

The tying of the *tāli*, in aristocratic lineages, by a Nambûdiri Brahman or other personage of higher caste in place of an *enangan*, fits in with the custom of hypergamous marriage. The higher caste bridegroom's role gives ceremonial recognition to the overlordship of *nāḍuvaris* over *desavaris*, of kings over *nāḍuvaris*, and in religious matters, of Nambûdiri Brahmans over all. The higher caste lover had no more rights in his mistress than the Nayar and even fewer obligations to her. At the same time the function in the political and economic systems of these high caste men's roles as ritual and physiological husbands and fathers to members of the castes below them must not be underestimated. Today the old political system has

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and coconut symbolize female fertility. The couple's act of eating from the same leaf, and the Tiyyar girl's act of mixing sweet porridge, grinding with a grindstone, and 'cohabiting' with the loin-cloth of the bridegroom, may be interpreted as symbolic intercourse.

In the North Malabar Tiyyar rite the barber as well as the *tāli*-tier appears as a vicarious bridegroom. Before the *tāli* is tied, he uncovers the girl's face and head, an act performed by the bridegroom in many Hindu marriage-rites. He then places coins in her hair and pours on to them coconut water from an *aswatha* leaf. Since this leaf represents Vishnu and male creative power, I regard the pouring of coconut water from it on to the coins as symbolic intercourse.[1] The barber is paid in cloths for his services, much as the ritual bridegroom is paid in South Malabar Nayar and Tiyyar rites.

In all the groups, then, it was necessary for a girl to be, at least symbolically, deflowered before puberty. Next, the girl is secluded for three days before the rite under circumstances almost identical with those of the first menstruation. Like a woman during that period, she might not eat meat, salt, tamarind or chillies, nor see a man, tree, plant, crow, dog, or cat. Among the Tiyyars, Thurston (1906, p. 3) reports that in some areas she kept an arrow, said to be the arrow of Kama Devan, always beside her.

This seclusion with an arrow looks like symbolic cohabitation with a token bridegroom, as in the South Malabar Tiyyar girl's seclusion with the loin-cloth of the bridegroom *after* the *tāli*-rite. At the same time, it must be noted that among Tiyyars, Nayars, and also some Tamil castes, a woman keeps beside her a knife during menstruation; it is said to ward off attack by evil spirits.

These observances of the first menstruation and of the mock-menstruation before the *tāli*-rite must be seen in the context of a set of beliefs concerning menstruation in general. It is believed that a Nayar or Tiyyar woman is in a dangerous as well as a polluting condition during menstruation, especially the first. It is feared that, if she disregards any of the prohibitions, she may be raped by evil spirits, appearing as hairy animals. This circumstance results in hysterical, dissociated behaviour or in dangerous loss of blood. It is said also that if a man foolhardily copulated with a menstruous woman, he would become impotent. Similarly, if the woman were to urinate at the base of a tree, or walk in a paddy-field, the tree or the paddy would wither and die. If she were to approach a temple or the ancester-shrine of her *taravād*, the temple-god or the ancestors might inflict her with excessive bleeding, or strike her dead.

To interpret these beliefs, I make use of Ernest Jones's (1931, pp. 44, 54, 73) theory that the evil spirits of myths, superstitious beliefs, and daytime phantasies arise from the same unconscious source as those of nightmares, and that the evil shapes seen in nightmares invariably issue from repressed incestuous desires, the fear engendered by which causes the desired object to appear in terrible form. The hairy animal-spirits who may rape a menstruous woman are thus male parent-imagines. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact of the fear of attack from a god or dead *kāraṇavan*'s spirit (patrilineal among South Malabar Tiyyars, matrilineal in the other groups), should the menstruous woman approach them. Since it causes dangerous bleeding, the attack by a god or an ancestor is evidently sexual, like that by the hairy animals: all therefore probably indicate an unconscious dread of being raped by a male parental figure with, underlying this, a repressed incestuous desire.[2]

The fact that evil spirits attack when the woman breaks the prohibitions (e.g. on seeing a man, or some other animal or plant phallic symbol) may reflect fear of the unconscious

[1] For the sexual significance of anointing in general see Ernest Jones (1931, pp. 207-8). Alternatively we may regard the barber's act as that of a paternal figure who, by anointing her, confers fertility on the girl.

[2] Melanie Klein (1932, p. 307) notes that the European girl at puberty frequently exhibits fear that her father may attack and copulate with her in a sadistic way, either because she has had sadistic masturbation phantasies about her mother or because he wishes to get back the penis she has taken from him.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll

Nayar
Tiyyar

588 182 184 *sambandhom* lover he came in a different role. Among South Malabar Tiyyars the prospective husband might tie the *tāli*. But in this case, too, his roles were kept separate: the post-puberty marriage rites must be gone through if the bridegroom (with his brothers) became permanently married to the girl. In any case the ritual bridegroom was usually a small boy; this is the important point here. Among North Malabar Tiyyars a potential mother-in-law tied the *tāli*, or else the barber woman, though in this ceremony the barber is protagonist in the rites marking the girl's passage to womanhood. In the higher matrilineal castes, and among North Malabar Tiyyar barbers, the rite is performed by an elder of high rank. Among North Malabar Nayars, however, the lower caste Marar drummers (who, like the barber for Tiyyars, conduct Nayar funeral rites) play a role suspiciously like secondary bridegrooms, since they place ornaments on the girl's arms and address her for the first time as a married woman, before the *tāli* is tied.

588 182 833 My hypothesis is that in all these cases the choice of *tāli*-tier indicates, on the part of men of the society, a general, unconscious fear of deflowering women. Barbosa (Stanley tr. 1866, p. 7) gives us a clue to this when he says that even after the *tāli*-rite, Nayar mothers went 'begging some young men to deflower the girl, for among themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women'. Castenada (Kerr ed. 1911), similarly reports that in the Zamorin's family the girl's kindred 'send for a young man of the Nayar caste out of the kingdom, and give him presents to induce him to initiate the young virgin, after which he hangs a jewel round her neck. . . .' Even for the Zamorin's sisters, therefore, the 'initiator' 's role was unpopular: he must be induced with gifts to fulfil it. Hamilton (1727, p. 174) notes that the 'Nambourie or chief priest' must deflower the Zamorin's Nayar mistress (presumably at the *tāli*-rite) before the Zamorin could cohabit with her, and that 'some of the Nobles are so complaisant as to allow the Clergy the same Tribute'. That the Nambūdiris' privilege was not one exacted under protest from the Nayars, but willingly accorded, appears from his remark that 'the common people cannot have that compliment paid to them, but are forced to supply the Priest's place themselves'.

182 588 564 88 The unwillingness to deflower a woman is explained on the grounds that it is a 'disgrace' and an 'unclean thing'. Here, evidently, is the clue to why the North Malabar Tiyyar *tāli* was tied by a barber woman, and the rites symbolizing defloration, or perhaps conferring fertility on the woman, performed by a barber man. Tiyyar barbers, like their washermen, pollute Tiyyars and may not ordinarily touch them. Both castes attend at the real first menstruation of a North Malabar Tiyyar girl, where the barber man and barber woman perform ceremonies similar to those of the mock menstrual seclusion before the *tāli*-rite. The Tiyyar washerwoman must at all times supply the girl with a lower cloth (*mattu*, 'change') in which [842] to bathe on the fourth morning of menstruation. She supplies this cloth also for the bath after [533] the mock seclusion before the *tāli*-rite. At the real puberty-rites, however, it is the headman [789] of the washerman caste, and not a woman, who hands the clean loin-cloth on the third night to kinswomen of the girl, after singing a song designed to enhance her fertility.

564 88 182 842 782 533 The role of the washerman as a man associated with the fertility of women appears again in the first menstruation ceremony of South Malabar Nayars. Though the Nayar washerman washes ordinary cloths for Nayars, the lower caste, Tiyyar washermen (*Mannan*) provides the clean loin-cloth for bathing after menstruation and child-birth. At the Nayar puberty-rites, after the ceremonial bath on the fourth morning, the eldest washerman stands on the verandah and instructs the girl, who sits before him within the house, to make an offering with rice and coconuts to the sacred household lamp. While the natal kinsmen of the girl hide themselves on the back verandah (a place usually occupied by women) a group of washermen assemble on the front verandah and sing vulgar songs relating to sexual intercourse before the girl and her kinswomen, with a view to enhancing her fertility. At the end, her mother [533] pays the head washerman the cloth which the girl has worn to cover her head and face.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

553
554 Malabar, where it is a creation of the Zamorin.

7. *Asán.*—The word means a teacher. He is also a head-man (*Karayinmél Asán*), who has certain social functions in connection with the marriage and other ceremonies.

8. *Achan.*—The word means father. It is the title of the Palghat Rajas, the ministers of the Calicut and Cochin Rajas (Mángát Achan and Páliyat Achan), and also of several other old Nayar chiefs.

9. *Manndtiyar.*—This is the title of certain aristocratic families in the Chittur Taluk near Palghat. The word is derived from *man*, earth, and *nétiyavar*, earners.

564 582 833 783 Marriage prohibitions. Among the high caste Sudras marriage is hypergamous, while the low caste Sudras are endogamous. This is the general rule, though exceptions may sometimes be found. A Nayar is allowed to cohabit with a woman lower in the social scale than himself, but his womenkind are prohibited from exercising the same liberty. This is called the *Anulómam* and *Prathilómam*. Dr. Gundert derives *Anulomam* from *Anu* with *lómam rómam* the hair, going with the hair or grain. So *Prathilómam* means going against the hair or grain. According to this usage, a Nayar woman, consorting with a man of the higher caste, follows the hair, purifies the blood, raises the progeny in social estimation. By cohabitation with a man of lower subdivision, clan or caste, she is guilty of *Prathilómam*; and if the difference of caste were admittedly great, she would be turned out of her family to prevent the whole family being boycotted.[1]

564 582 783 The rule of *Anulómam* and *Prathilómam* is everywhere observed with great strictness. In many cases, Nambuthiris, Embráns, Póttis and Tamil Brahmans, Kshatriyas and

1. Alliance between the people of North Malabar and South Malabar seem to be extremely rare. It is partly because of the principle of Prathilomam and perhaps partly that the Nayar women cannot cross the Korapuzha which marks the boundary between the two. Nor can the women of the extreme north of North Malabar cross the river between it and South Canara. The reason is said to be that the Kolathiri Raja so commanded owing to the fear that was entertained about their being captured and taken as wives by the Arabs. Similarly, till about fifty years ago the Nayar women from North Travancore and Cochin were prohibited from going beyond Quilon southward. These customs are being overlooked by the educated members of the community and it may almost be said that the custom has begun to die out.

[784] [562] [584]

Further, in the extreme south of South Malabar a high caste bride mates with a low caste bridegroom on the Prathilomam already explained. The husband cannot touch her without pollution, when she is engaged in taking meals. In the case of Nambuthiris, the same custom is in force and they cannot be seen, while engaged in religious ceremonies or taking meals. With the spread of education, official status, wealth, power, and influence, many of these time-honoured customs are fast disappearing.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

the wedding dress is torn and given to the *Chithayan* which signifies the dissolution of marriage. In some places this takes place on the morning of the fifth day, and instead of this ceremoney the *táli* tier is given a fee of eight annas and is dismissed with some presents, and in others the cloth is severed into two parts and each part given to the bridegroom and the bride separately in the presence of *enangans* and other friends. Throughout South Malabar, the severing of the cloth on the fourth day is indispensable and is part of the ceremony, while, in this State, it is said that the custom is not now in vogue. The marriage badge is not removed soon after the divorce, but is worn by the girl till the twenty-eighth day. Some remove it on the fourth or the fifth day, while others wear it for a week.

In poor families, where this ceremony cannot be performed on a large scale, the girls are taken to the nearest temple, and the *táli* is tied by the mother with neither feasting nor merriment. In some cases very poor people take their girls before the deity in the *Trikkákkarappan* temple and tie the *táli*, and very often do such people perform the ceremony on the *Onam* day in front of the clay image (*Mahádévar*) placed in their court-yard.

Where the Thirumulpád is the *táli* tier, he goes through the ceremony for a number of girls, and on receipt of the fee for his service to each girl, he departs in peace. If the *táli* tier, whether a Kshatriya or a young man of the *enangu*, wishes to take her as his wife, he is at liberty to do so with the consent of her parents; and in that case he has to celebrate the *sambandham* by giving her presents of cloth.

In South Malabar and the Cochin State, the general belief among the Nayars is, that the bridegroom has a right to marry her if he wills, and the severing of the cloth shows the dissolution of the marriage tie, which gives her the liberty to choose anybody else as her husband. It is also understood that, with the tying of the *táli*, the virginity ceases, and he who brings or takes her to that stage has a right to cohabit with her, which he relinquishes on the fourth day of the *Tálikettu kalyánam*. Further, the woman observes a sort of pollution for fifteen days for the death of the man who tied the *táli*, which proves that he is her husband. In some parts she merely bathes, and even this has been of late given up.

The following is given to be the explanation of the ceremonial:—There is very little difference between the *Tálikettu*

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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responsibility to support their wives and children from their family property. Whether it was introduced by the Nambuthiris, it is difficult to believe; and it is to be noted, that it was prevailing to a considerable extent in North Malabar, among whom and other low castes their influence was less than in South Malabar and the Cochin State.

The *Smriti*[1] says, "the Sudras' appointed path to Heaven is serving the Brahmans". "The practice of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, having sexual intercourse with the servile women is in accordance with the *sástrás*. If a Brahman wish to have sexual intercourse with a Sudra wife, the Sudra is bound to gratify the wish. A Sudra cannot be sure of the true parentage of his children". Again, before the Malabar Marriage Commission, the Zamorin Maharaja Bahadur, Ettan Thampuran Avergal, a learned Sanskrit scholar, Kolattúr Váriar and other respectable witnesses unanimously deposed, that, in Kerala, a non-Brahman or *marumakkathâyam* woman need not be chaste, and she is not forbidden to consort with more than one man. To such teachings of the learned and influential leaders of the orthodox community, the Nayars of these days will no longer submit.

Another important theory connects the practice with the military organisation of the Nayar community. Montaigue was evidently of opinion, that it was introduced, because the Nayar leaders looked upon an army of bachelors as the most effective instrument in war.[2] The subjection of the males of a whole race from the earliest youth to the decline of manhood must therefore have been the cause of the fugitive connection and promiscuous intercourse.

European writers, such as Baron Avebury, Meyr, Mc. Linan, and others, have arrived at the conclusion, that the system of inheritance now prevalent among the Nayars must have originated from a type of polyandry resembling free love. In ancient times, the rule was that the wife should remain in her own house and be visited by her husband, and that the eldest female was at the head of the house, which was afterwards transferred to the eldest male. The part of man in the function of generation passed as of secondary importance or as

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.
2. Essays of Michael Montaigue,

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW11 Kerala AW11

105 588 Without going into the elaborate details of the occasion – which are very different, depending on the caste to which the girl belongs – it is enough to mention that its main item is the tying of the *tali* round the child's neck by someone who is, usually, a substitute bridegroom or *manavalan*. He should be of a higher or at least of the same caste, but he can also be an old, venerable person who has already done this, for instance, to the mother; sometimes the father takes the place of the *manavalan*, at others, it is the maternal uncle. That the mother herself should do so, is not unknown, and cases in which a clay figure has taken the place of a live person are on record. It has also become increasingly the custom to tie the *tali* on many girls at the same time (to save expense), and the tendency is to do the ceremony earlier and earlier in the children's lives.

After the man who ties the *tali* has fulfilled his task, he is not entitled to touch the girl. But shades of the times when he perhaps did do so still exist in the practice of his attempting to force the girl's bedchamber door, and of his being pelted by male onlookers belonging to her kin group, which does take place in some of the lower castes. In south Malabar, he is supposed to lie down under the same blanket with the girl for a few moments; among the Ambalavasis, and in some of the sub-castes, he may even spend three nights with her, but under the strict supervision of a chaperon put there to see that he does not touch her. In some cases, a form of divorce ends the ceremony before the *manavalan* is allowed to go. *Tali* tying is universal in Kerala, where it is not [184] limited to the Hindus only, but is also practised by the Moslem Moplas and the Christians.

105 581 588 833 [183] It is interesting to note that the Portuguese traveller of the beginning of the sixteenth century, Duarte Barbosa, mentions that before a Nayar girl can be married, afer the *tali* has been tied on her, she should be deflowered before puberty, by some young man called in specially to do this from outside the caste, "for amongst themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women" (*The Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, p. 124).

4. LAND-TENURE

105 241 Kerala is an agricultural state and everyone in it is either dependant on the produce of the land or linked to it by serving those who till the soil. The main crops are rice, coconuts, pepper and arecanuts, in that order of importance. Others, less important, are pulses, tapioca, spices such

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans

were definitely separated from each other, but they were already themselves shy in each other's presence, and tended to keep apart. I was surprised to hear the informant mention so long a period of latency, beginning too so early, but of course, what she said should not be taken too literally, there being a strong possibility that she was either mistaken or that she was giving me the information which she thought I would like to hear. She was also the sole source of what I learned in these matters, and I did not have an opportunity to check up on what I heard with any other woman. Still, I find what she told me to be worth mentioning, because it may be that, after all, children in Kerala do have a relatively longer period of latency than was to be expected in such a community.

I enquired about pre-nuptial sexual relations, but the informants, Nani and Panju, assured me that no such things existed. On the contraty, they said, virginity was very highly praised, not only in a girl but also in a boy. Here again, I have my doubts as to the accuracy of this reply, suspecting a knowledge of European ideals in such matters, especially those of the Victorian era. Since much that is British in India today still reflects this period, this may have influenced them to give me such an answer. It was added, however, that other, higher castes, such as Nayars, had no such prejudices, and because of this I have wondered if the information did not take the form that it did out of a desire to praise Thandans and show them up in a favourable light in comparison with Nayars. It was probably a combination of both that prompted them to take this attitude: they wanted to make out that their caste conformed to European standards in what concerned pre-marital sexual relations and was therefore superior to that of the Nayars, their immediate rivals.

I enquired privately, one day, what was the position adopted in coitus by this community. I was told that, contrary to what happened in higher castes where the man lay below the woman, with Thandans the man was always above. The contrary "was not favourable to the procreation of warriors", a strange remark I thought, considering that it was the Nayars who, in olden days, constituted the martial class. I had already heard about this particular way in which some castes in Malabar were reputed to have sexual intercourse, when I was working with the Todas in the Nilgiris during the summer of 1949. I will be giving an account of it in the chapter about these people.

The only point which my interpreter was willing to concede to the higher castes was that they were less inclined to homosexuality than the

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

836 Thandans. With the latter, a lot of men were known for their proclivi-
564 ties of this sort, and they were nearly as bad as the Moplas, I was told.
177 The latter were very much addicted to sodomy, but then it was part of their culture, and had been acquired with Islam from the Arabs.

833 There was no impotence or frigidity in Kerala, not with any caste, I
569 heard. People were far from "cold" and passion, rather, was the rule. I was given a long description of the consummate art with which the higher castes indulged in amorous pleasures and assured that the lower castes had only learned from them. It seemed, however, that the Thandans could never hope to excel in these matters, especially the women who were still far from being the "angels" which those of their superiors undoubtedly were.

674 Asked about crime, neurosis, and insanity, my interpreters said that, to their knowledge, there was little of these in the area. As only recently, since my arrival in Shoranur, a Thandan woman had assassinated her husband, I remarked on the circumstance and asked them how they reconciled it to their statement. They replied that it was an exceptional event, and that for a long time previously, nothing of the sort had hap-
[181] pened. People, on the whole, were docile and not aggressive. They did not even indulge in poisoning, which occurred quite frequently in other
158 parts of the country. Again, insanity seemed to be restricted to the
755 Moplas, who, apart from occasionally running amok as is well known, had members of their community frequently tied up in a mosque or to iron stakes, in the hope that they could thus be cured.

D. POLYANDRY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERALA

197 Unquestionably, polyandry no longer thrives as it did in Kerala and
[595] research into what changes have brought about this situation over the last two hundred years cannot fail to be of interest. I myself, having returned to the area after an absence of ten years, was able to notice many alterations, although these were not sufficient to warrant any
[119] specific consideration. Dr A. Aiyappan, Superintendent, Government Museum, Madras, has made a particular study of the Irava community, and in his publications on this subject, and on the more special aspect of polyandry in other castes of Malabar, has shown what factors are involved and how foreign contact has undermined the old culture and is bringing a new one into existence. Readers are referred to his books
[127] and articles listed in the Bibliography. I give here a brief outline of his

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

hardie as to come into that house. The king's children shall not inherit the kingdom after their father, because they hold this opinion, that perchance they were not begotten of the king their father, but of some other man, therefore they accept for their king one of the sonnes of the king's sisters, or of some other woman of the blood roiall, for that they be sure that they are of the blood roiall."

In his "New Account of the East Indies, (1727)" Hamilton wrote: "The husbands," of whom, he said, there might be twelve, but no more at one time, "agree very well, for they cohabit with her in their turns, according to their priority of marriage, ten days more or less according as they can fix a term among themselves, and he that cohabits with her maintains her in all things necessary for his time, so that she is plentifully provided for by a constant circulation. When the man that cohabits with her goes into her house he leaves his arms at the door, and none dare remove them or enter the house on pain of death. When she proves with child, she nominates its father, who takes care of his education after she has suckled it, and brought it to walk or speak, but the children are never heirs to their father's estate, but the father's sister's children are."

Writing in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Grose says * that "it is among the Nairs that principally prevails the strange custom of one wife being common to a number; in which point the great power of custom is seen from its rarely or never producing any jealousies or quarrels among the co-tenants of the same woman. Their number is not so much limited by any specific

* Travels to the East Indies.

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

beg some of their relations and friends to marry these daughters, and they do so. It must be said that they have some gold jewel made, which will contain half a ducat of gold, a little shorter than the tag of lace, with a hole in the middle passing through it, and they string it on a thread of white silk; and the mother of the girl stands with her daughter very much dressed out, and entertaining her with music and singing, and a number of people. And this relation or friend of hers comes with much earnestness, and there performs the ceremony of marriage, as though he married her, and they throw a gold chain round the necks of both of them together, and he puts the above mentioned jewel round her neck, which she always has to wear as a sign that she may now do what she pleases. And the bridegroom leaves her and goes away without touching her nor more to say to her on account of being her relation; and, if he is not so, he may remain with her if he wish it, but he is not bound to do so if he do not desire it. And from that time forward the mother goes begging some young men to deflower the girl, for among themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women."

The tāli-kettu ceremony is referred to by Kerr, who, in his translation of Castaneda, states that "these sisters of the Zamorin, and other kings of Malabar, have handsome allowances to live upon; and, when any of them reaches the age of ten, their kindred send for a young man of the Nāyar caste out of the kingdom, and give him presents to induce him to initiate the young virgin; after which he hangs a jewel round her neck, which she wears all the rest of her life, as a token that she is now at liberty to dispose of herself to anyone she pleases as long as she lives."

4: Yalman E-4,5 (1954-1956) 1971 AX4 Sinhalese
Kerala AW11

121 scent groups may be generally placed in the highest categories and
564 still be connected by a chain of descending unions with such categories
611 as the Sudra. To recall the situation in Ceylon, such groups as the
[171] Karava (Fishers), who are usually seen as a "separate" caste in other parts of the island, are associated with the hierarchy of Vellalar matrilineal descent groups on the eastern littoral. Thus, in the Malabar context, too, a category such as Nayar covers a wide spectrum of
121 ranked descent groups. Gough suggests that apart from the royal
564 matrilineages of the various kingdoms, it is possible to detect five
[613] subcategories of Nayar groups (1961, pp. 308–309): (*a*) Kiriattil and Vellayma Nayar, (*b*) Puratta Charna (Outdoor Retainers) Nayar (but these have subdivisions such as Pariccha Menon (Leaders of the Shield), (*c*) Agatta Charna (Indoor Retainers) Nayar, (*d*) Pallichan Nayar, and (*e*) Sudra Nayar. This is not a hard and fast hierarchy and we are told (p. 309) that "In some districts they ranked in the order given and men of the higher [category] might marry women of the lower [category]; the reverse was in theory forbidden. In other districts the [categories] seem to have disputed for precedence and *not to have regularly intermarried*" (my italics).

121 It is clear that in this system it is possible, for instance, to have
564 at the top a single matrilineage whose men may be connected to a
613 small group of matrilineages who are equals and who marry among themselves. They in turn may be connected with a larger group of matrilineages of a still lower caste, and so on. Furthermore, actual *sambandam* connections may or may not be systematically established between the levels. As long as the principles are clear, it hardly matters what the status-bearing groups are called: in widening circles we have the matrilineage, which may be part of a hypergamous cluster (category), which in turn may be part of a more inclusive "subcaste" or indeed an endogamous caste.

121 Also in the Cochin region, according to Gough (1961, p. 319), hy-
114 pergamy is a custom of the aristocratic matrilineages and is associated
564 with the prestige of unilineal descent, whereas in the levels "below
613 the Nayar temple menials" the categories were endogamous "as is usual in the caste system throughout India."

[833] Why hypergamy at the aristocratic levels? Gough in answer to this
[554] question has taken a curious combination of materialist-psychoanalytic arguments: it is her theory that hypergamy accords with the power structure of the political system and with the special reasons why virgins must be deflowered by powerful men before they are safe for ordinary mortals (see Gough 1955*a* and 1961, *passim*).

Dumont has proposed an important, but very different, answer. He notes rightly that the most powerful and superior Nayar lineage still had hypergamous connections with Brahman who were ritually su-